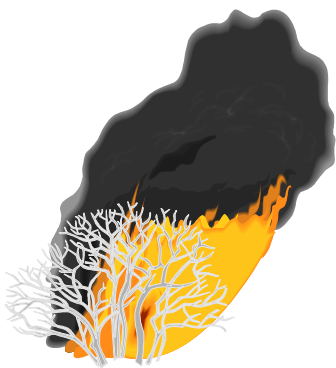




Fact Sheet — Wildland Fires



**“Install smoke
detectors on every
level of your home.”**

Fire poses a real threat for people living near wildland areas or using recreational facilities in wilderness areas. Advance planning and knowing how to protect buildings in these areas can lessen the devastation if a wildland fire occurs.

Before

- Learn and teach safe fire practices.
 - Build fires away from nearby trees or bushes.
 - Always be able to extinguish the fire quickly and completely.
 - Never leave a fire—even a cigarette—burning unattended.
- Obtain local building codes and weed abatement ordinances for structures built near wooded areas.
- Use fire-resistant materials when building, renovating or retrofitting structures.
- Create a safety zone to separate the home from combustible plants and vegetation.
 - Stone walls can act as heat shields and flame deflectors.
 - Swimming pools and patios can be a safety zone.
- Check for fire hazards around your home.
 - Install electrical lines underground, if possible. Keep all tree and shrub limbs trimmed so they don't contact the wires.
 - Prune all branches around the residence to a height of 8 to 10 feet. Keep trees adjacent to buildings free of dead or dying wood and moss.
 - Remove all dead limbs, needles and debris from rain gutters.
 - Store combustible or flammable materials in approved safety containers and keep them away from the house.
 - Keep chimney clean.
 - Avoid open burning completely, especially during the dry season.

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Adapted by UF/IFAS from:
Federal Emergency
Management Agency
(FEMA)

**“Have disaster
supplies on hand.”**

- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and near sleeping areas.
- Make evacuation plans. Plan several routes in case the fire blocks your primary escape route.
- Have disaster supplies on hand:
 - Flashlight with extra batteries
 - Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
 - First aid kit and manual
 - Emergency food and water
 - Nonelectric can opener
 - Essential medicines
 - Cash and credit cards
 - Sturdy shoes
- Develop an emergency communication plan. Family members can be separated from one another during a wildland fire, for example when adults are at work and children are at school. Have a plan for getting back together.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone knows the name, address and phone number of the contact person.

During

- Turn on a battery-operated radio to get the latest emergency information.
- Remove combustible items from around the house:
 - Lawn and poolside furniture
 - Umbrellas
 - Tarp coverings
 - Firewood
- Take down flammable drapes and curtains and close all venetian blinds or noncombustible window coverings.
- Take action to protect your home:
 - Close all doors and windows in your home to prevent drafts.
 - Close gas valves and turn off all pilot lights.
 - Turn on a light in each room for visibility in heavy smoke.
 - Place valuables that will not be damaged by water in a pool or pond.

- If hoses and adequate water are available, leave sprinklers on roofs and anything that might be damaged by fire.
- o Be ready to evacuate all family members and pets when fire nears or when instructed to do so by local officials.

After

“Use caution when re-entering a burned wildland area.”

Take care when re-entering a burned wildland area. Hot spots can flare up without warning. Check the roof first and extinguish any sparks or embers. Check the attic for hidden burning sparks. For several hours afterward, re-check for smoke and sparks throughout the home. If trapped in a wildland fire do not try to outrun the fire. Crouch in a pond or river. Cover head and upper body with wet clothing. If water is not around, look for shelter in a cleared area or among a bed of rocks. Lie flat and cover your body with wet clothing or soil. Breathe the air close to the ground through a wet cloth to avoid scorching your lungs or inhaling smoke.

Fire-Resistant Building Materials

Avoid using wooden shakes and shingles for a roof. Use tile, stucco, metal siding, brick, concrete block, rock or other fire-resistant materials. Use only thick, tempered safety glass in large windows and sliding glass doors.

Mitigation

Mitigation includes any activities that prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening, or lessen the damaging effects of unavoidable emergencies. Investing in preventive mitigation steps now, such as installing a spark arrestor on your chimney, cleaning roof surfaces and gutters regularly, and using only fire-resistant materials on the exterior of your home, will help reduce the impact of wildland fires in the future. For more information on mitigation, contact your local emergency management office.

Additional Resources

- o Your local emergency management office
- o Your American Red Cross chapter